

Challenges to Canadian Library Resources and Policies in 2010:
*Report of the Annual Survey of the
Intellectual Freedom Committee, Canadian Library Association*

Alvin M Schrader, Donna Bowman, and Toni Samek
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For the first time in five years, no challenges were reported in the 2010 annual survey of challenges to library materials and policies in Canadian libraries to *And Tango Makes Three*, the children's picture book published in 2005 by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson. Even so, another LGBTQ-positive picture book was challenged for the first time in 2010, *Uncle Bobby's Wedding*, a 2008 publication by Sarah S Brannen.

Altogether, 92 challenges were reported in the 2010 survey that is conducted annually by the Canadian Library Association (CLA) Intellectual Freedom Committee. Of these, 87 were to library resources and five involved library policies.

A resource challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials based on objections of a person or group, in order to prevent or limit access. A policy challenge is an attempt to change access standards for library resources.

The survey revealed 85 unique titles were challenged. Only two items were challenged twice, the LGBTQ weekly newspaper *Xtra! West*, and the Punjabi and English versions of the Sikh religious text *Guru Granth Sahib* (also called *Adi Granth*). Author Neil Gaiman's works received two challenges, for *American Gods* and *M is for Magic*.

Two series were challenged, once each, the Dark Horse manga series of 14 titles based on four of the *Star Wars* movies, and the seven titles in the *Harry Potter* movie series. (A challenged series is counted as the total number of individual titles.)

Challenges were multi-layered, almost always involving more than one rationale and altogether totalling 142 grounds for objections to the 87 titles targeted in 2010. The many-pronged justification offered by a public library complainant about *The Waiting Dog*, a picture book by Carolyn and Andrea Beck published in 2003, illustrates this phenomenon: "violence; offensive language; age inappropriate; obscene content, language and pictures."

Three major reasons accounted for 60% of all complaints: "sexually explicit," mentioned 33 times; "age inappropriate," mentioned 31 times; and "violent," mentioned 23 times. There were 10 complaints about offensive language, and another four or fewer complaints on the grounds each of racism, nudity, insensitivity, sexism, homosexuality, anti-ethnicity, inaccuracy,

drugs/drug use, political viewpoint, religious viewpoint, sex education, or “does not support curriculum.”

Some two-thirds of all challenges to library materials involved books (38 titles) and graphic novels (21 titles), and 26% of the others were to DVDs. Two challenges were lodged to a newspaper, two to magazines/journals, and one to a sound recording.

Of the 21 challenges to graphic novels, 15 titles (70%) were for children’s publications in that genre. There were also 12 other challenges to children’s picture books and three to children’s fiction. Four challenges were reported to young adult fiction and nine each to adult fiction and adult non-fiction.

The vast majority of both resource and policy challenges, more than 80%, occurred in public libraries, and all but one of the other challenges took place in school libraries. By far the majority of concerns were initiated by patrons in general (65%) or by parents and guardians (24%). Two challenges each were initiated by grandparents, library administrators, and library staff members, and one challenge each by a school student, a school administrator, an educational assistant, a chief librarian, a chief and council, and an elected official.

In all but two of the 87 challenges to library resources, targeted items remained on library shelves. Three-quarters of retained materials were unchanged in status. However, 16% resulted in restricted access and 9% in relocation or reclassification. Most challenges were resolved quickly, within a month, but a few took six months or longer.

Five policy challenges were reported in 2010, involving a range of requests: to ban restricted movies from those under 18 years of age; to allow family members to pick up materials on hold for spouses; to extend library hours for an afterschool homework program for all students; to relocate college library print resources related to sexual satisfaction in marriage from the general collection to the teacher resource section in the back room; and to ban offensive material of a graphic nature. Four of the five challenged policies were revised in compliance with expressed concerns; one policy was unchanged.

Two items were reported in both the 2009 and 2010 surveys, the DVD documentary *Islam: What the West Needs to Know*, and the children’s book *My Mom's Having a Baby!: A Kid's Month-to-Month Guide to Pregnancy*, by Dori Hillestad Butler.

Findings of the 2010 survey provide clear evidence that attention to the core value of intellectual freedom remains central to the advocacy work of Canadian librarians and their allies.

As CLA President **Karen Adams** observes: "Libraries have a basic responsibility to maintain access to the right of all persons in Canada to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity, and intellectual activity."

With the high number of challenges reported to entire series of titles over the last two years (four challenges to a series of 10 books and one challenge each to series of variously 15 books, 29 books, 2 items, 7 DVDs, and 14 manga), a recommendation is made encouraging library decision-makers to adopt a policy of requiring complainants to fill out a separate reconsideration form for each and every individual title in a series, if that is not already the practice.

The *Annual Challenges Survey*, initiated in 2006 by Toni Samek who was then convenor of the CLA Intellectual Freedom Committee, has now been conducted for five years (bilingually since 2009). The Canadian survey was inspired by two precursors, the Edmonton Public Library's challenged materials spreadsheet, and the confidential database maintained since 1990 by the American Library Association (ALA). ALA's online challenge reporting form can be found at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/challengeslibrarymaterials/challengereporting/onlinechallengeform/index.cfm>. The form can also be printed as a pdf.

The goal of the CLA *Annual Challenges Survey* is to document complaints about materials and policies in publicly-funded Canadian libraries with a view to informing the Association's policy and advocacy work for intellectual freedom on behalf of the CLA membership. An innovation in the Canadian approach was the inclusion on the 2007 survey of questions about challenges to library policies related to intellectual freedom or access to resources.

The Survey is voluntary, and the self-reports forwarded to the Committee represent only a fraction of all challenges that occur during any calendar year. The American Library Association's estimate is that for every challenge reported in their Web database, four to five go unreported.

List of Challenged Resources and Policies Reported by Publicly-Funded Canadian Libraries, 2010

(bibliographic descriptions are primarily reproduced as reported by library officials)

Series – 1 challenge each:

Harry Potter DVDs (series of 7 titles)

Star Wars manga series, Volume 3, Dark Horse Comics (series of 14 manga), by George Lucas and illustrated by Hisao Tamaki and Tom Orzechowski, translated from the Japanese

Individual item – 2 challenges each:

Guru Granth Sahib (also called Adi Granth)

Xtra! West

Individual item – 1 challenge each:

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie

Akeelah and the Bee, DVD, written and directed by Doug Atchison, produced by Laurence Fishburne, Sidney Ganis, Nancy Hult, Daniel Llewelyn, and Michael Romersa

Alice on Her Way, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Alice the Brave, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

American Gods, by Neil Gaiman

Beauty's Punishment, by Anne Rice

Big Bad Bun, by Jeanne Willis and illustrated by Tony Ross

The Bigness Contest, by Florence Parry Heide

Black Hole, by Charles Burns

The Boys, Volume 5: Herogasm

Breakdowns: Portrait of the Artist as a Young %@&*!, by Art Spiegelman

Bruno, written by Sacha Baron Cohen and others

Calf Roping, by Roy Cooper

Catwoman: Crime Pays, by Will Pfeifer

Certain People: A Book of Portraits, by Robert Mapplethorpe

CFA: 100 Success Secrets – 100 Most Asked Questions, by Howard Cohen

Chicken Soup for the Unsinkable Soul, by Jack Canfield et al.

Cold Feet, by Cynthia DeFelice

The Complete Fairy Tales of Charles Perrault, translated by Neil Philip and Nicoletta Simborowski

Dear Dumb Diary: Never Underestimate Your Dumbness, by Jim Benton

Dino Dinners, by Nick Manning and Brita Granstorm

Don't Be That Guy, by Colin Nissan and Sean Farrell

The Dumb Bunnies Go to the Zoo, by Dav Pilkey

Eastern Promises, by David Cronenberg (writer/director)

Egg Drop, by Mini Grey

Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, DVD, directed by James Hawes, produced by Nigel Marchant

Gardens of the Night

Good Evening Vietnam, by Brian McNally, *Vanity Fair Magazine*, April 2008

Grace, DVD, written and directed by Paul Solet (screenplay)

The Great Mouse Detective (Disney)

Guru Granth Sahib

Hot City, by Barbara Joosse

Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain

In the Realm of the Senses, directed by Nagisa Oshima
Islam: What the West Needs to Know, DVD
Jay Wiseman's Erotic Bondage Handbook, by Jay Wiseman
Lost Song, DVD
M is for Magic, by Neil Gaiman
Man Bites Dog, DVD
The Man Handler, by Cairo
Maria Monk, by Sylvie Ouellette (French)
The Muppets Wizard of Oz
Murphy's Law, by Colin Bateman
My Mom's Having a Baby, by Dori H Butler
The New Adventures of Jesus Christ: The Second Coming, by Frank Stack
Outside Over There, by Maurice Sendak
Pir, by Vladimir Sorokin
Real Outlaws, DVD
Rolling Stone Magazine, specifically September 2010 cover
See Inside Pirate Ships, by Rob Lloyd Jones
Slocum and the Lucky Lady, by Jake Logan
Stars, by Jordan Ladd, Samantha Ferris and Gabrielle Rose
Swans in the Mist, by D E Athkins
The Third Woman: The Secret Passion that Inspired "The End of the Affair", by William Cash
Tintin in the Congo, by Hergé
Trick 'r Treat, DVD
Uncle Bobby's Wedding, by Sarah S Brannen
Victim Six, by Gregg Olson
Voices of Iraq
A Voyage Long and Strange: Rediscovering the New World, by Tony Horwitz
The Waiting Dog, written and illustrated by Carolyn and Andrea Beck
War Stories, Volume 1, by Garth Ennis
Zift, DVD
[title unreported], by Paul Kropp

Policies – 1 challenge each:

Policy request to change "Restricted" rating to disallow borrowing to those under 18 years of age.

Policy request to allow family members to pick up materials on hold for spouses.

Policy request to extend library hours for an afterschool homework program.

Policy request to relocate college library print resources related to sexual satisfaction in marriage from the general collection to the teacher resource section in the back room.

Policy request to ban offensive material of a graphic nature.